BANG CHAN

164 [146] among children in Bang Chan is not known. One thing which residents of Bang Chan appeared to have in common with other populations which have been reported to be relatively caries free, was low intake of sugar, particularly in a form which would be apt to adhere to the teeth.

Adults up to 44 years of age, in the random sample, retained most of their teeth. A few adults in Bang Chan have had missing teeth crowned. [301] More sound than missing teeth were found to be crowned, however, i.e. in this community a crowned tooth appears to have cosmetic value.

759 [164] A variety of serious illnesses were found to occur among residents of Bang Chan. As a rule, local traditional practitioners were consulted first, but most persons reported to have been seriously ill eventually received treatment by outside practitioners with some training in modern medicine.

[844] [743] The majority of mothers in childbirth were attended by local traditional midwives, but a few difficult cases were taken to the government Health Center in the nearby town of Minburi, where a trained midwife was in attendance.

165 [163] Of 438 pregnancies reported by 84 mothers, over 90% resulted in live births. Of the 397 living children born to these women, 81% survived at the time of interview. Within the first month of life, 7% had died, and a total of 11% died within the first year. Tetanus was prominent among causes of death of infants under one month of age. Infantile beriberi caused some deaths among older infants. In a majority of cases, the cause of death of infants could not be clearly identified, but fever, debility and convulsions were the symptoms most commonly described.

196 Almost half of the persons examined for possible signs of nutritional deficiency, 46% of the school children and 47% of the family sample, were free of such signs. The remainder, slightly more than one half of persons examined, had from 1 to 7 signs each. In general, more of the children and adolescents than the adults were free of possible signs of malnutrition, and the larger percentages of persons with 2 or more signs were in the groups of older persons examined. Signs most often noted, namely changes in tongue, lips, skin and hair, and absence of knee and ankle jerk, might reasonably be associated with apparent deficiencies of riboflavin, vitamin A and thiamine [164] in the diet. The only clearly defined deficiency disease observed among residents of Bang Chan during the field study was beriberi.

14 Hemoglobin values of 11.5 g or less per 100 ml. were

BANG CHAN

14 observed in 9% of the school children 7 to 14 years of age who were examined, and in about 6% of the males and 25% of the females over 15 years of age. Of 337 persons examined, however, 2 only, one child and one adult female, were found to have hemoglobin values under 9.75 g per 100 ml.

744 514 164 364 Modern sanitation was practically unknown in Bang Chan. Few families had covered pit latrines or made any effort to cover excreta. Intestinal parasitism was common. Garbage might be fed to animals, but was frequently thrown into the canal or elsewhere about the compound. Provisions for protecting foods from contamination were meager.

When rain water was available, it was used for drinking, but several months each year water from the canals or fish ponds was used without prior treatment. For washing vegetables, cooking and washing dishes, canal and pond water was used throughout the year.

744 751 A few changes in sanitary practices, if they could be brought about, might reduce some kinds of illness substantially. For example, if the villagers would adopt the practice of boiling pond or canal water whenever it is to be used for drinking, contamination from this source would be materially reduced.

Use of boiled water for bathing babies and all persons with abrasions or open wounds would probably reduce the incidence of skin infections, and enable those which do occur to heal more quickly.

Infantile tetanus could be largely if not entirely prevented if the local midwives were taught to use sterile scissors for cutting the cord, and to avoid contact of the cord with soil.

758 121 Modern medicine will probably not be readily or generally available to a majority of the residents of Bang Chan for many years to come. The first step toward better health in a village such as Bang Chan appears to be to teach the people, through their local leaders and practitioners, to adopt improved health practices. To be effective, such teaching must be based not only on a knowledge of what the people do, but on an understanding of the way they think and feel about customary practices.